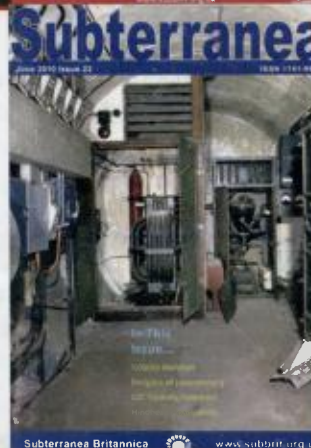
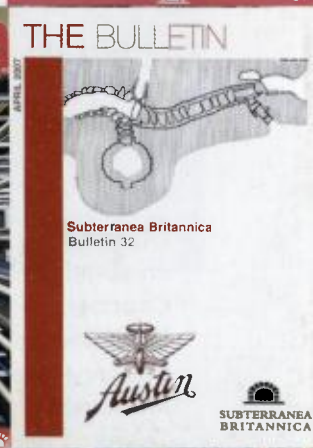
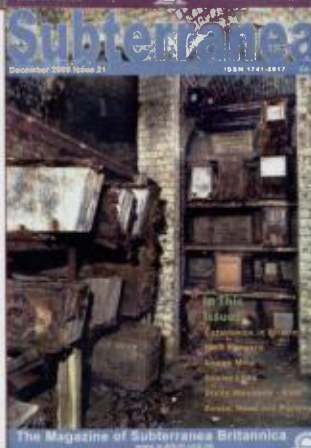
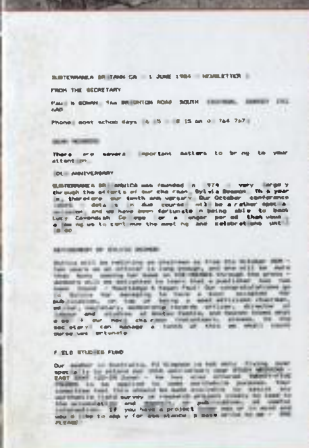
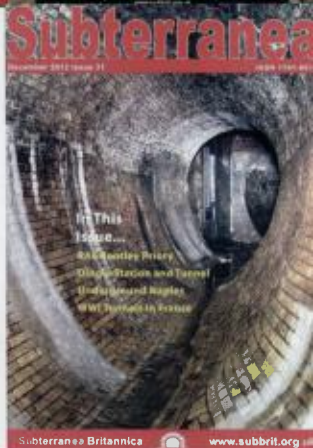
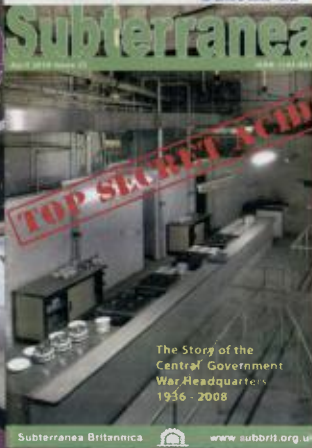
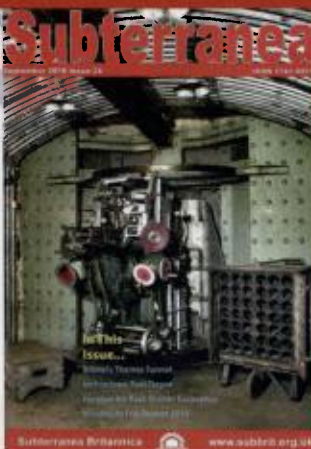


Subterranea Britannica



Subterranea Britannica is a society devoted to the study of man-made and man-used underground structures and the archaeology of the Cold War. The society is open to all and its membership includes all walks of life. Members are invited to contribute to this magazine even if this just means sending very welcome snippets from newspapers and magazines.

Editor: Nick Catford 13 Highcroft Cottages London Road Swanley Kent BR8 8DB
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Sylvia Beamon enjoying a visit to a German souterrain.
Photo Phil Marshall

Back page upper: Robert Lowe (centre) our 1,000th member being welcomed at Royston Cave in 2010, Sub Brit's spiritual home. Photo Tim Robinson

Back page lower: Aerial view of the Grand Entrance Hall at Brunel's Thames Tunnel decked out for Sub Brit's 40th birthday party. Note the marks on the wall left by the spiral stairway installed for the opening, on 25 March 1843, as a pedestrian subway prior to laying the railway tracks. Photo Nick Catford

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However the Editor reserves the right not to publish material without giving a reason.

The committee of Subterranea Britannica and the Editor do not necessarily agree with any views expressed and cannot always check the accuracy of any material sent in.

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Subterranea Britannica at 40 – a Birthday worth celebrating!

Martin Dixon and Paul Sowan plus other contributors

A world tour for Sub Brit members in 2014 should arguably include Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the USA, Myanmar and Kenya. Why? Because these countries have the world's most important ruby mines and 2014 is Sub Brit's Ruby anniversary. What started forty years ago as an academically-based group has grown over the years to become a vibrant international society, whose interests, membership, publications and activities have all grown and gone from strength to strength.

Many of today's activities had their roots in the 1970s, such as the publication of a regular journal and the organisation of day conferences. Other aspects which are taken for granted today could not even have been dreamed of at that time. The ability to freely visit what were at the time classified Cold War structures, or our superb online presence, were not even dreams in those early days.

This special supplement which looks back over our first forty years has been jointly produced by Paul Sowan and Martin Dixon, with special input from Sylvia Beamon on our formative years. But the real heroes are those countless members who have attended committee meetings, organised visits, spoken at conferences, written articles, balanced our books, developed our website and otherwise contributed to the amazing society we have today.



Sylvia and Alan Beamon at the SFES Congrès at Vézelay in 1977.
Photo Dorothée Kleinmann

Any omissions or inaccuracies are entirely the authors' fault but we hope to have included a reference to most major events over the years. Not everything is listed in strict historical order so after the top-level history there are sections on different aspects of the society. So read on and enjoy but as the old saying goes: "It's OK to look back at the past – just don't stare!"

Our Beginnings

Sylvia Beamon, our founder, writes: "Often people ask me why I like the underground. I think it stems from being a child in WWII, living in Mill Hill on the outskirts of London. My father cut two trapdoors in our house, one in the living room and the other in the hallway near the front door. He knew there was a cavity below at the back of the house, not shown on the house plans. He put in steps, electric light, tins of food and water plus a hammer and chisel to cut our way out if necessary. My mother's sister, husband, two children, my parents, my brother Laurence and I all sheltered there in the worst of the air raids – our refuge. I felt safe underground."



Professor Raymond Mauny (second left) – the inspiration behind Sub Brit with other members of SFES in 1974.

Photo Sylvia Beamon

"The later founding of Subterranea Britannica was intrinsically tied up with my own research work on the Royston Cave in Hertfordshire, and my theory that this man-made underground structure may have had some connection with the Knights Templar. In around 1971 I had written to France to try and locate some graffiti attributed to the Templars in Chinon and the person who replied was Raymond Mauny, Professor at the Sorbonne University, also President of the Société Française d'Etude des Souterrains (SFES).

"Prof. Mauny became my first mentor and we started a long-term correspondence. It was his idea that I should write to Cambridge University and try and find someone who might be interested in underground sites with the possibility of starting a UK group similar to SFES. When I wrote 'cold' to the University I got a response from Dr



Raymond Smail, an expert and writer on the Crusades. Dr Smail's help was legion; he translated archive material from Latin, gave me numerous Supervisions, and showed me how to use the Cambridge University Library.

"Although I wrote many other letters all over the country, there was little interest in the subject of underground sites. It was quite dispiriting. I was also studying for A-Levels (Archaeology and Sociology) and my supervisor Tony Legg advised me to give up this interest because, in his opinion, it would never get off the ground in our country.



'Paul Sowen explores the flooded upper level of Morwellham Galton Mine in the 1980s. Photo Ron Marshall

"I persevered and eventually found Paddy (Patricia) Christie (D of E, now English Heritage) who was an archaeologist interested in Iron Age souterrains. Prof. Mauny and I discussed possible names for the new British society. 'The Study of Souterrains and other Subterranean Sites' was one. Nicely alliterative but hardly pithy and a major problem was that the word *souterrain* in our country really only relates to the Iron Age period. Eventually, the Professor came back with the suggestion **Subterranea Britannica**. He followed it up by saying, 'Well, it has the same initials as your name Sylvia Beamon and you will be the founder.' Sorted, summer of 1974.

First Paid-up Member

"Around this time Prof. Mauny informed me of a British SFES member who lived in the Loire and suggested I

contact him, which I did. Adey Horton, a former Major in the British Army who had been active in the Resistance in the Baltic, was a Medieval Art Historian and author. He lived six months in London to study at the British Museum, and six months at Troo in a series of troglodyte caves. He became my third mentor, and was invaluable with his help in the possible dating of some engraved figures in Royston Cave. On a visit to his flat in London, I told him I was trying to start a similar Society to SFES. Alan and I were just leaving when he said, 'Wait a sec.' He disappeared for a few moments then came back with a cheque, saying, 'I would like to become Subterranea Britannica's first paid-up member.'

"And so he was. Subterranea Britannica was launched: the idea of a Frenchman, achieved through the energies of an English woman and with a troglodytic-dwelling ex-Resistance fighter as our first member! Prof. Mauny felt it was essential that I find a Professor to head the new society. I was given an introduction and went out to lunch with Professor Daniel and his wife, managing to persuade him to join.

"The inaugural meeting of Subterranea Britannica was held at Emmanuel College Cambridge on 21 September 1974. Chairman and Officers of the first Executive Committee was made up of the following: Prof. Glyn Daniel (St John's), Hon. President; Dr. John Alexander, Chairman; John Garrod (Hon. Treasurer); Neil Beacham (Librarian); Pam Goodey (Secretary); and myself (Publications Secretary); plus three elected committee members and two co-opted members."

From Federation to National Society

In the early days, it was the intention to develop the group formed in Cambridgeshire into a federation of similar societies, with a 'skeleton' national body overseeing activities. It soon became clear, however, that existing local groups felt no need to have an umbrella organisation. Therefore just a couple of years after formation, Sub Brit 'went national' at the suggestion of the first chairman, John Alexander.

A meeting was held at the Institute of Archaeology (University of London) on 23 October 1976. The meeting was advertised as the launch of a national underground



Paul Sowen emerges from the drains beneath Canterbury Cathedral in 1984. Photo Phil Marshall

society with the emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach, one that has stood to this day. The intention was to involve engineers and scientists, alongside historians and archaeologists.

It was at this meeting that Paul Sowan first got involved, attending as a geologist with a particular interest in east Surrey stone mines. This interest had been triggered by someone else who was to become another long-term Sub Brit member – Brian Hillman. Paul spoke at this inaugural meeting and found himself elected as National Secretary! He has of course continued to serve Sub Brit tirelessly as chairman and later as a committee member ever since.

New Depths

In the earliest days, our stated aims were ‘to promote interest and research throughout the British Isles into artificial souterrains, especially those related to manors, castles, and other such dwellings’. This scope effectively mirrored that of our continental cousins, whose primary interest was in spaces associated with human occupation, albeit serving different purposes such as religion, storage, shelter or simply dwelling space.

The emergence of a national society and the different backgrounds and interests of a growing membership gave rise to an increase in scope that is still growing today. Although our initial interests were comparatively narrow, the influx of new members broadened our interests to include chalk mines and deneholes (influenced by Kent members) and underground stone quarries (Surrey members). Military structures too became of interest as our membership expanded. It was only a matter of time before our objectives were restated as:

‘... the encouragement of the highest standards of research into all man-made or man-used underground cavities in Britain ...’



Early Sub Brit visit to Fort Amherst. The dress code was slightly more formal in those days! Photo Phil Marshall

Anticipating the Channel Tunnel and budget airlines, the same Statement of Aims went on to add ‘Comparative studies, too, of individual sites with others of a similar nature elsewhere in Britain and Europe will be encouraged’. So by 1978 we had set our scope much wider than our continental cousins, making it difficult for any subterranean structure to be considered out of scope.

The ‘man-used’ addition also brings into our sphere of interest any natural space that has been used by man. Taken literally, this includes speleology and pot-holing but in reality we have mainly focused on show caves and spaces used by humans in prehistory and later.

Sub Brit was an early member of NAMHO (National Association of Mining History Organisations) – a body formed in 1979 that brings together all those with an interest in mining history (over fifty as at 2014). Our initial application was treated with some suspicion as our interests were far wider than other members’. Over the years we have grown to be the largest single member and contributed to countrywide initiatives on mine preservation and recording. NAMHO-organised weekends also became a further outlet for those with an urge to explore.



Relaxing after the exertions of Parys Mountain copper mine, Anglesey, in 2000. Photo Linda Bartlett

The Cold War thaws

During our early years, the many structures built to predict or protect in the event of conflict during the Cold War were classified and strictly off-limits. But by the early 1990s the Berlin Wall had fallen and a vast new area for research and study opened up. Sub Brit embraced this new genre and spearheaded the development of popular knowledge and understanding of Britain’s Cold War infrastructure. This led to an increase in membership as many of those who had grown up through the period of Cold War were thirsty to find out how we would have coped if things had turned nasty. Malcolm Tadd, then joint secretary, spearheaded this expansion with great enthusiasm.

In 2006 an appeal to members raised sufficient money to purchase an important collection of images and documents of (mainly) Cold War sites that had come on the market. Over sixty members contributed to their acquisition and generously passed the collection on to Sub Brit. Many of the images are available online and the material is often used in articles and made available to other researchers.

Some purists would only define a site as underground if there is natural earth above, thus disqualifying semi-sunken and even cut-and-cover structures. However, we



Sub Brit on parade at the Acomb ROC Group Headquarters in 2008. This was to be Ian Walker's (extreme left) last trip before his sad passing. Photo Linda Dixon

have generally taken a liberal view of what constitutes 'underground' including semi-sunken and surface bunkers, as their design and function mirrors that of more fully protected structures. In addition we have never shied away from looking at history related to underground sites. For mining we are happy to study everything from geological maps to surface features such as dressing sheds and pit-head baths.

Similarly, to understand military structures one needs to understand the prevailing political and military backdrop. The committee and the authors believe that this more liberal interpretation has served us well and long may it continue.



Light relief at Caphouse Colliery mining museum. Photo Martin Dixon

Present Company Accepted

The suggestion that Subterranea Britannica should become a registered charity was made in the early 1990s, with Malcolm Tadd being a particular enthusiast. Before this happened, however, we needed a suitable

single constitution (there being two in existence, probably dating from the national/local federation model). This took a fair amount of behind-the-scenes work by Paul Sowan and Martin Dixon and an EGM or two to ensure that everything was agreed by the membership.

Before the charitable step was taken, the Committee proposed becoming an incorporated organisation (a not-for-profit company). This achieved two ends – one being that Sub Brit as an entity could then enter into contracts (for example ordering goods or booking hotels) and secondly as a limited liability company; this should reduce the likelihood of individuals being financially at risk from decisions taken by the society. The first meeting of Subterranea Britannica Limited as a company was taken after the final

EGM of the unincorporated society in 2007. Although we remain a limited company, the 'Limited' was subsequently dropped from our registered name.

Charity begins at home

A few years later, in 2011, charitable status followed after hard work by Sue Monsell, our treasurer for many years, and Martin Dixon. Much of the work was answering pro-forma questions but a final test was to find independent sources who would testify to the fact that our activity and output could be judged as both charitable and educational. We were delighted when Roger Bowdler (English Heritage's Designation Director) made such a declaration, being well aware of our work and website, particularly of military sites.



Sue Monsell and a Dalek at the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry. Photo Martin Dixon

The final step once our charitable status was confirmed was to be accepted by HMRC as eligible for Gift Aid status. This again took much work, particularly by

Sue Monsell – not helped when our application was mislaid even though we had an acknowledgment and file number. But all's well that ends well and approval finally came through – Sue was even able to make retrospective claims derived from her meticulous records. With our new-found status we were thus able to generate additional funds and increase our ability to fund worthy projects. In the first couple of years these have ranged from interpretation boards to producing leaflets and helping fund the protection and restoration of key sites.

Onwards and Downwards

One of the delights of studying underground space is that unlike some interests (birdwatching or steam locomotives, for example), the scope for our study is steadily expanding. The world's first underground railway was opened in 1863; yet by 2014, this has expanded to an astonishing 168 partly or wholly underground mass-transit systems (known as Tubes, Metros, Subways and U-Bahns amongst others) in 55 countries. Mines are reaching ever deeper levels in the search for scarce mineral resources and as property prices soar, the excavation of basements multiplies.



Roger Starling emerges from Victoria Arches in front of Manchester Cathedral on our 2011 weekend of visits.

Photo Martin Dixon

And of course high-profile projects such as Crossrail, HS2 and the Thames Tideway are increasing our underground real estate day by day. This isn't to say, of course, that iconic underground sites are not being lost to nature, vandalism and development. But there is a growing recognition that our underground heritage is a valuable part of mankind's history and many more sites now have statutory protection. A number of mines are now Scheduled Ancient Monuments and many tunnels have their portals at least protected as listed buildings (unlined tunnels are not deemed to be 'buildings' and so the bores themselves are often not protected). And English Heritage has taken the lead in ensuring that at least a representative set of Cold War structures are preserved for



Sub Brit study weekend at Ironbridge in 1979. Photo Sylvia Beamon

posterity. This has recently included the scheduling of no fewer than nine areas of the former standby government headquarters beneath Corsham.

Visits and Study Weekends

From an early date, part of the fascination of underground sites has been making visits and exploring them. As described earlier, it was Sylvia's fascination with Royston Cave that catalysed our creation and visits have held an attraction over all our history. Early visits of course mirrored our stated interests and included sites such as Reigate and Chislehurst caves, and the rock-cut domestic passages, stores and dwellings beneath Nottingham.

As a UK-wide organisation, it became clear that the best way to make travel across the country to visit a site worthwhile was to arrange to visit a number of sites in the same area and so the 'Study Weekend' was born. On early weekends, members typically arranged their own accommodation and used their own transport. As the society grew, the social element also grew and before long many weekend visits included coach travel and centrally-arranged accommodation that meant the 'study' between members could go on long into the night propping up the hotel bar!



Possibly Sub Brit's smartest turnout on a Study Weekend. Officers' Mess, Castlemartin Tank Range, Pembrokeshire 2003. Photo Roger Starling



Our accommodation on such weekends has varied from the spartan to the luxurious but some particularly memorable accommodation has been:

- * Scout huts in Fife
- * The Officers' Mess at Castlemartin Ranges in Pembrokeshire
- * A sister hotel to Fawlty Towers in Eastbourne
- * A coastal artillery bunker in Hemso, Sweden
- * Center Parc Lodges in Cumbria
- * A luxury hotel in St Helier, Jersey
- * The floating (non-luxury!) Boatel hotel in Maastricht, Netherlands
- * A completely dry Methodist College in Derbyshire.



Our unusual accommodation in Maastricht – the 'Boatel'.
Photo Ken Geddes

Transport of delights

Our method of transport to sites has also varied. A local coach is most often used but we have also sampled:

- * A steam train to Birkhill fireclay mine
- * A Parisian barge through the St Martin tunnel in Paris
- * Narrow-gauge railways in mines and the Prague service tunnels
- * A chartered double-decker bus to RAF Holmpton



Unusual transport for visit to RAF Holmpton. Photo Linda Dixon

- * High-speed RIB to Inchgarvie in the Firth of Forth
- * 1930 'Sprague' stock on the Paris Metro
- * Narrowboats through Dudley and Foulridge canal tunnels
- * Eurostar to Paris and Maastricht.

Coaches have broken down on several occasions, but we have always managed to reach our destination, albeit occasionally with a few members out the back pushing (Bath) or bouncing cars out of the way (Eperleques, France) or even stepping outside and directing traffic (Devon).



London Underground official with a red light in the running tunnel to stop the next eastbound Piccadilly line train.
London Study Weekend 1995.
Photo Martin Dixon

Sadly, over the years, access to underground sites has often become more and more difficult to arrange. A combination of staff reductions, Health and Safety rules, terrorism concerns, insurance issues and so on has meant that some sites are now firmly 'off-limits'. To illustrate the changes that have taken place, on our London study weekend in August 1995, forty Sub Brit members were easily able to visit:



- * Extensive heating and service tunnels beneath Imperial College
- * Aldwych disused underground station including walking up one tunnel to Holborn and back down the other
- * Kingsway underground telephone exchange at Chancery Lane
- * Down Street disused underground station including boarding a Piccadilly line train through the driver's cab to return to Green Park
- * Kingsway disused tram tunnel including the Flood Control centre.

A list of some of the more interesting and unusual sites that Subterranea



Members of Sub Brit standing beneath the Crown Street air shaft of the Wapping tunnel in Liverpool in 2012. Photo Chris Iles



Sub Brit visit to Kingsway telephone exchange.
Photo Martin Dixon

Britannica has visited across the years is in the panel at the end. Very often the spread of backgrounds and interests of Sub Brit members greatly adds to the interpretation of a site.



You don't have to have a beard and waistcoat to attend Study Weekends but it helps! From left: Brian Hillman, Lyndon Cooper and Martin Briscoe compare notes. Photo Roger Starling

Members' Meetings

Of course you can learn a lot about a site without actually visiting it and presentations have always been an important part of Subterranea Britannica's activities. Thanks to the excellent connections of Sylvia Beamon, for many years conferences were held at Lucy Cavendish College in Cambridge. These were genteel occasions with a glass of sherry in the Founder's Room before lunch but (hopefully as today) long-term members and our Officers were always on the look-out for new members to greet and welcome.

In the 1980s, we alternated Cambridge with the Royal School of Mines in London – a venue with obvious underground roots and one we have used ever since. Unfortunately (though fortunately in terms of the health of the society), we outgrew Lady Cavendish College in the 1990s and now hold most of our Day Conferences in London. The logic is that it's easy to reach London from almost anywhere else in the UK; this approach was supported by a members' questionnaire in 2011. That said, we have a policy of holding occasional day meetings elsewhere in the UK (and of course our visits are truly UK-wide). We have held meetings in High Wycombe, Leicester and Liverpool and will meet in October 2014 in Newcastle-on-Tyne.

It is our policy – and in line with our charitable aims – to welcome non-members to our day meetings which both helps to balance the books and provides a steady stream of potential new members. We have had particularly large audiences for presentations by Peter Laurie (author of *Beneath the City Streets*) and Duncan Campbell (ditto, *War Plan UK*). However it is often our own Sub Brit members whose presentations are the most enthralling and a slot for members' 'brief communications' is always reserved as part of the day's proceedings.



The Bulletin

Subterranea Britannica's first publication was the initially-slender *Bulletin*, produced twice yearly until 1986 and then roughly annually until 1994. Articles in early *Bulletins* included many on more or less 'antiquarian' topics reflecting the Society's more limited interests in those days – papers on Cornish and Irish souterrains seemed to appear very frequently. And equally valuable papers on deneholes, ice houses and Nottingham's sandstone 'caves'.

However, as a foretaste of what was to come, issue 3 (1976) contained a short item headed 'Former ammunition dump in Wiltshire' relating to the Eastlays and Monckton Farleigh former Bath stone quarries. Harry Pearman (who was some years later elected one of our small band of honorary members) contributed an early article on mining in *Bulletin* 5 (1977): this concerned the Jacqueline Close chalk mines at Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. Over the following years, there were increasing numbers of articles on mines and quarries.

David Barnes introduced military topics in 1980 with an article entitled 'Underground fortresses – Chatham Lines'. Transport tunnels as a topic emerged in issue 14 (1981) with Paul Sowen's notes on 'Road tunnels in Iceland and the Faroe Islands', followed in the same issue by our first mention of coal mining, with 'Chatterley Whitfield Mining Museum Trust' by Jonathan Bryant. Roger Morgan (then of the London Subterranean Survey Association, and our sometime treasurer) makes an appearance in the same issue, with a four-and-a-half-page article on 'Selected underground structures in London.' Issue 16 (1982) had a further contribution from Roger Morgan on 'Second World War deep public air-raid shelters' based on a Home Office file in what was still called the Public Record Office (now the National Archives). As can be seen, by now our *Bulletin* was beginning to carry items that would interest the majority of our current membership!



Members at Queensferry gun emplacement overlooking the Firth of Forth on the 1991 Study Weekend.
From left: Sylvia Beamon, Barbara Tadd, Linda Bartlett, Phil Marshall, Deric Fuller, Nora Leach. Photo Martin Dixon

Familiar faces appear

Nick Catford makes an appearance in *Bulletin* 24 (1988) with an article on 'Underground photography'. His interest in subterranean exploration stems from an evening class he attended in Sutton, at which Paul Sowen was the tutor, the topic being Surrey's mines and quarries. Nick and Paul subsequently, with Chris Bayley (later also made an honorary member) and Peter Burgess, made an exhaustive photographic and topographic survey of the very extensive Merstham – Chaldon labyrinth of largely medieval stone quarry tunnels in east Surrey.



Nick Catford in characteristic pose in Brunswick disused railway tunnel, Harrogate. Unusually, the tunnel later became an air-raid shelter. Photo Linda Dixon

By 1991 we were still publishing on our 'traditional' topics such as Nottingham 'caves', ice houses, and the like, but with a better balance of all topics within the membership's evolving range of interests. The 1994 *Bulletin* (30) contains a number of papers originating from our expanding international links, with 'Underground farming' and 'The Paris sewers' by Emmanuel Gaffard (Paris); 'The secondary use of subterranean limestone quarries around Maastricht in Belgium and the Netherlands' by Ton Breuls (Kanne); 'Subterranean Prague' by Vaclav Cilek (Prague), and 'The Icelandic souterrains: a survey' by Guðmundur Guðmundsson (Reykjavik). Almost all of these overseas sites have been visited by our members, most of them on our organised visits or during the course of international conferences.



A memorable underground lunch in limestone quarries near Maastricht, arranged by Joep Orbons and his SOK colleagues.
Photo Clive Penfold

The last edition of the *Bulletin* was published in 2007, partly because of the workload of the then editor but largely due to the growing success of our new publication *Subterranea* (see below).

Other publications

In 1984, the 'Newsletter' was introduced. Started by Paul Sowan, it was initially known simply as such, later (for reasons unclear!) becoming the *Chairman's Newsletter*. It was subsequently continued by Malcolm Tadd and became, for more obvious reasons, the *Secretary's Newsletter*. It tended to be used for short visit reports and snippets from the media, although more substantial articles were sometimes included – particularly if a *Bulletin* was some time away.

By 1996, to reflect the growing interest in Cold War matters, a new publication – *Siren* – was started. This was published for a new special-interest group within Sub Brit: the Research Study Group or RSG. The originator was Tex Bennett, who said in the first edition: "It aims to present an objective view of the UK's infrastructure and plans used in the period 1945–1990 for National Defence."



Lars Hansson atop a 7.5cm artillery cupola at Femöre Fortress in Sweden. Photo Linda Dixon

Siren was issued alongside the *Secretary's Newsletter* but members had to opt in to receive it. Dan McKenzie later took over as Editor. An early thought was that RSG might be set up as a separate society but the authors believe it is fortunate that this did not happen – not least because many Cold War structures were adopted from earlier structures and others have proved to have a quite different after-life.

Other notable publications over the years have included a *Members' Handbook*, produced in 2007, and the *UK Site Directory*, masterminded by Roger Starling in 2011. The latter is sold via the website and generates useful funds, as well as providing valuable information and a potential source of new members.

Members and Writers

It is worth noting under this heading that some members have published substantial books in their own right as authors. One of the earliest was *Secret Passages and Hiding Places*, written in 1974 by member Nicholas Newell (under the pen-name Jeremy Errand). Sylvia



Study Weekend in 2009 in front of the Golgotha tunnel, East Kent preserved railway line.
Photo Jane MacGregor

Beamon herself has produced *The Ice-houses of Britain* (1990) and her *Royston Cave* (1992) and *Underground mythology* (2002) are noteworthy.

Andrew Emmerson has had several volumes published, ranging from his 2007 *London's Secret Tubes* (with Tony Beard) to the more compact *Shire Guides to Underground Britain*. And more recently Nick Catford's superbly illustrated and intelligently written *Cold War Bunkers* (2010), *Burlington* (2012) and *Secret Underground London* (2013) are widely admired (and very much more than coffee-table works). Other members are prolific authors of papers and notes in a wide range of periodicals as well as in *Subterranea*.

Subterranea

Our flagship publication *Subterranea* was initiated by the late Dan McKenzie, in 2003. Immediately popular with members, it effectively combined the *Bulletin*, *Newsletter* and *Siren* in a single publication (though many of the day-to-day *Newsletter* topics were being absorbed by email announcements and exchanges). Professionally printed with colour cover and (later) full-colour inside spreads, the publication was voted the most valued aspect of Sub Brit membership in the recent members' questionnaire.



The much-missed Dan McKenzie in familiar territory in Germany in 2006. Photo Nick Catford

After laying the foundations, Dan's role as Editor was taken over by Nick Catford who has taken *Subterranea* from strength to strength. Special mention should be made of *Subterranea* 22 which was a special single-topic issue, written by member Steve Fox and describing in great detail the enthralling and complicated history of the secret standby Government Headquarters beneath Corsham. Various known as Stockwell, Turnstile, Burlington and Chanticleer, amongst other codenames, the site was declassified in 2004 and its fascinating history has been meticulously researched and recorded. SB22 continues to be one of the most sought-after back issues and has been reprinted twice.

Subterranea has been favourably compared with many professional magazines and the team which works together with Nick to produce the thrice-yearly issues is:

Sub-editors – Linda and Martin Dixon

Plans and diagrams – Tim Robinson

Layout – Martin Snow

Proof reading – Stewart Wild

Back issues are available to purchase online and copies are also deposited with all of the UK's deposit libraries. It is a lasting tribute to Dan that his enthusiasm and application have spawned such a memorable legacy.

Our Web presence established

The first incarnation of Sub Brit's website came about in October 1995. It consisted of just two pages that Richard Lamont had thrown together to demonstrate the kind of thing that could be done, for the committee's perusal. This was developed a little further before going public. For the first five years the site was hosted on Richard's own web server and he continued to provide backup services for several years beyond this.

Sub Brit really was in at the very start of the World Wide Web's transformational existence. Few businesses and even fewer societies had their own websites at this time. As Richard himself says:

'In 1995, less than 2% of the UK population had internet access at home. Most people did not know what 'email' or the 'world wide web' were. There was no broadband; we used dial-up telephone-line modems that managed roughly a thousandth of today's broadband speeds. Although it was already growing fast, I don't think many of us realised just how big and important the internet was going to become.'

For the first couple of years, Richard wrote most of the site's scant content: mostly brief details and a few photos about twenty or so of the Cold War sites that were his main interest. Gradually more members got online and started to contribute material. By the late 1990s the content was growing more rapidly. The technology helped: not only faster connections but also the arrival of flatbed scanners, digital cameras and computers that could display images properly.

Sub Brit also set up a members' email exchange list where underground-related topics (usually!) could be promoted



Mark Bennett leading Sub Brit round Dumpy Level beneath Dover Castle. Photo Martin Dixon



and discussed online. This service still generates healthy exchanges and thanks are due to those who contribute to or moderate the lists.

In 2000, the society registered the **subbrit.org.uk** domain name, and Mark Bennett took over from Richard as webmaster. Around this time Nick Catford began his prolific contributions to the site as well. For a while Gavin Saxby took over as webmaster, overseeing platform upgrades.

For the recent past our website – effectively Sub Brit’s ‘shop window’ – has been looked after by Richard Seabrook. Richard has made many great advances, initially integrating the previously separate Cold War, ROC and general site records beneath a new home page and introducing a GIS (Geographic Information System). Since then he has added our successful online shop, a repository for the Sub Brit collection of archive images and the recent new ‘mySubBrit’ membership portal.

Looking back on it, Sub Brit had web presence three years before Google. Facebook’s founder was just eleven years old at the time!

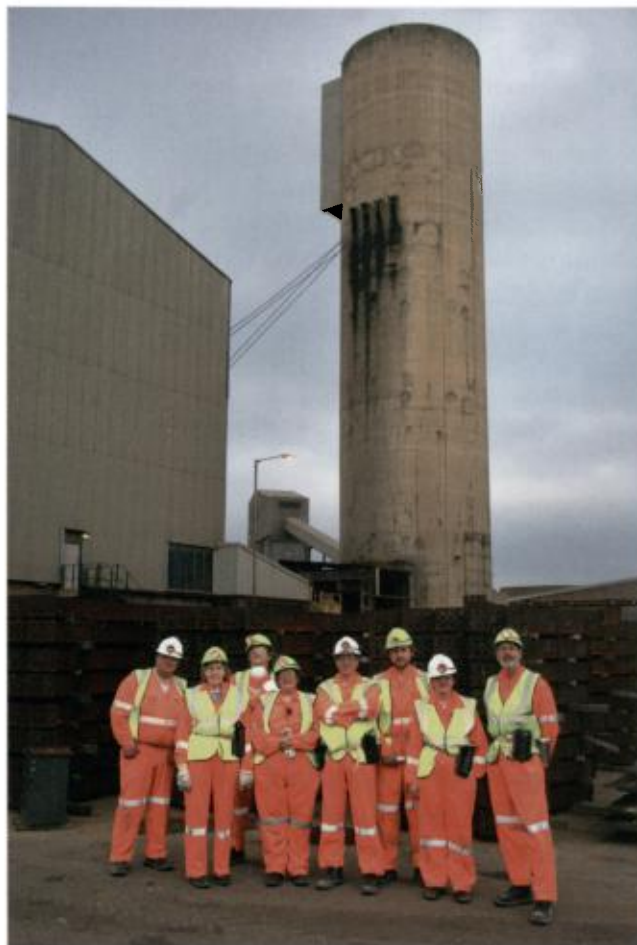
More recently, Sub Brit has established a presence on social media. Through Facebook, Twitter and Flickr, more than 4,000 enthusiasts regularly follow what Sub Brit is up to. James Buller has energetically set this up and keeps the news items flowing.

Committee and Characters

It goes without saying that our longevity owes much to the individuals who helped shape and drive Sub Brit’s activities. Early years had a number of ins and outs on the committee, with Eleanor Clark as Treasurer being our longest-serving officer (1977–1984). Relative stability came in 1984 when several long-serving members were elected. Paul Sowen started a 23-year period as Chairman and established the principle of working co-operatively with other bodies to achieve our aims. These include local heritage groups, national specialist bodies and international contacts. We set up ‘exchange’ relationships with many of these groups.



A relaxed group during the 1990 UK Study Weekend in Surrey – Malcolm Tadd in white helmet with Barbara Tadd seated in the foreground. Photo Sylvia Beamon



Visit to Boulby potash mine in 2007. Photo Nick Catford

Most notably Malcolm and Barbara Tadd became joint Secretaries, also in 1984. For almost twenty years (1984–2002) they worked in tandem devoting countless hours to make Sub Brit ‘tick’. For a while they organised our Day Conferences, Study Weekends and compiled our publications, in all cases to a high standard. Malcolm was also responsible for several feature articles in the national press (including *Punch*, *The Observer* and *The Times*) and featured in a number of relevant television programmes. Sylvia Beamon herself served energetically on the committee until 2003. MC Black served for many years as vice-chair and always ensured that the needs of those without modern technology were not forgotten; he also arranged visits and edited a *Bulletin* or two. Jim Bradshaw was an early committee member; he lost the sight in one eye on D-Day but this never stopped him travelling round the country on his motorbike. Jim’s last trip with Sub Brit before his death included an emotional return (his first since 1944) to the Atlantic Wall.

We have always been lucky to have found skilled and effective Treasurers. Following Eleanor Clark came Roger Morgan, then Gerald Tagg, followed by Sue Monsell and now Tony Radstone. The three previous post-holders are still active members – proof that joining the committee is not a life-sentence!

Some other familiar names who have been committee members over the years include Robin Ware, Tim

Robinson, Simon Mickleburgh, Bob Clary, John Smiles, Brian Hillman, Hugh Ainsley and John Burgess. And no mention of Committee members could be complete without acknowledging the immense charisma, contribution and commitment of Dan McKenzie, who tragically died in 2009 and left a great gap in our society. The committee sometimes met in a glue factory in Dan's home town of Peterborough – we have to stick together as he might have said!

Since joining in the late 1980s, Nick Catford has had many roles. He was responsible for large numbers of our website site records – not least the details of 1,563 ROC posts, all of which he has visited in a labour of love. His photography is legendary and he took over as *Subterranea* Editor in 2008. He even finds time to be Membership Secretary too, although with today's online systems the workload is much reduced.

Coincident with the move for Sub Brit to become a not-for-profit company, Martin Dixon took over as Chairman and Linda Bartlett became our Vice-chair. Continuing the precedent of Malcolm and Barbara Tadd, Martin and Linda have together steered Sub Brit to ever higher levels (if that isn't against our aims!). In particular they have brought more structure to Committee meetings, checked member opinions by issuing a questionnaire (with an astonishing response rate of over 50 percent) and devised and delivered some terrific study weekends and visits in the UK and overseas. Roger Starling has acted as Sub Brit's tireless Secretary for many years; in addition to routine administration his tasks include fielding hundreds of enquiries received via our website from around the world.



Visit to Hindhead during construction of the A3 road tunnel in 2010. Photo Nick Catford

Our latest honorary officer is our new President Dan Cruickshank. We were delighted when Dan agreed to take on the role; he is one of the few television presenters who have more knowledge than many of their interviewees and whose passion for history – including many underground sites – was revealed in series such as *Around the World in 80 Treasures*. We announced Dan's

new role at our 40th birthday celebrations in London recently and hope it will be a long and happy association.

International horizons

The international dimension influenced Sub Brit from the earliest days: as we have seen, the initial idea came from the President of SFES, our 'sister' French society. Since then we have maintained and expanded these links. We are also lucky to have a number of active overseas members who keep us well-posted with news and events and have helped organise events over the years. A number of Sub Brit members are regular attendees at conferences arranged by our overseas sister societies.



Champagne reception by the Mayor of Lezennes (on the outskirts of Lille) after a quarry visit in the commune. Many familiar faces in the crowd. Photo Martin Dixon

Special mention should be made of two UK-based international weekends of talks and visits organised by Sylvia Beamon. The first was based in Cambridge in 1978 and the second in Bath in 1992. At the latter we were invited to a civic reception at the Pump Room, the mayoral party being somewhat bewildered to find some of the Sub Brit delegates in caving attire rather than best bib and tucker!

Our international activities took off in 1999 when the tradition of holding one official overseas visit a year started. Martin and Linda Dixon took the lead



2007 Sub Brit weekend in Berlin. Sue Monsell stands between Sascha Keil (Berliner Unterwelten) and Robin Ware (weekend organiser). Photo Roger Starling



in setting these up and since then Sub Brit members have visited well (pun intended) over a hundred sites in France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Jersey, and the Czech Republic. In many cases these trips have been jointly organised with other members – including Robin Ware (Berlin), Brian Hillman and John Germain (Jersey) and those resident overseas such as Joep Orbons (Netherlands) and Lars Hansson (Sweden).

These ‘official’ trips have been augmented by smaller-scale trips arranged over the same period. Mike Barton has arranged many trips behind the former Iron Curtain and more adventurous members have ventured to Gibraltar, Turkey, Ukraine, the USA and even outback Australia. Wherever possible, spare places on these trips are offered to fellow members and we try to include reports on as many as possible within the pages of *Subterranea*.

The International Union of Speleology (UIS) is the international body for caving and has members in over sixty countries. It has a special-interest group for those who explore man-made space (‘artificial cavities’ being the slightly clumsy translation) on which Sub Brit is represented by Martin Dixon. This is another way in which our overseas links have been built and maintained and has led to productive contacts and friendships across the world.



Linda and Martin Dixon stand either side of an underground international boundary. Netherlands is to the left and Belgium to the right. Photo Ken Geddes

Hands-on Restoration

Much has been written about our visits to, talks about and recording of underground sites but it would be remiss not to mention more active intervention. From an early



Sub Brit celebrates its 30th birthday in Reigate in 2004. Photo Martin Dixon

date members have often taken a ‘hands-on’ approach to unearthing literally hidden sites. We were well under way trying to unearth an air-raid shelter in the 1980s in Surrey complete with mini-digger with the permission of the local golf club when we realised that the location wasn’t actually owned by the golf course! Tony Robinson never seemed to have this problem.

More recently, an immense amount of work has gone into waterproofing and conserving the derelict former Rotor radar station at RAF Wartling in Sussex. Under John Smiles’ energetic leadership great strides have been taken to ensure that the site is available for our descendants to explore. Other notable sites where our members and/or funding have been deployed include the ROC HQ at Craigiebarns in Dundee (Gavin Saxby and others), the Rotor and WWII bunkers at Barnton Quarry (Edinburgh), many ROC posts around the country, the former WWII Auxiliary training site at Coleshill, Wiltshire and many former private and school air-raid shelters.

As stated earlier, it has never been our intention that we become the sole body involved in our underground heritage. Many Sub Brit members are also members of other societies and much first-class preservation and interpretation work has been done through these local groups. These include archaeology and mining history groups and also transport enthusiasts such as the London Transport Museum Friends.

This section wouldn’t be complete without a mention of Paddock, the standby Cabinet war room in Dollis Hill, north London. For a dozen years or more, members have worked with Network Stadium Housing (the site owner) to offer guided tours round the bunker twice a year. Members give up their time to explain the site’s fascinating history and to safely escort hundreds of visitors on each Open Day. Around 8,000 members of the public have benefited from this over the years.



Anniversary Celebrations

You could say that our celebrations of significant milestones have become more and more exuberant as time has passed. Our tenth anniversary was marked by a short article in *Bulletin 20* on the circumstances of our formation. At 21 years (our 'coming of age'), members celebrated with a meal at the New Cavendish Club (albeit a year late, in 1996!). For our 25th anniversary, a similar event was held in the Commonwealth Club in Northumberland Avenue.

For our 30th birthday, a score or so members enjoyed a morning of underground visits in Reigate followed by a meal in a local restaurant. In 2010 a milestone of a different nature was reached when we surpassed 1,000 paid-up members for the first time. We visited Royston Cave – the site where we were conceived if not born – and again followed with lunch in a nearby pub. We had some local press coverage and presented our 1,000th member with a free year's membership and a Sub Brit hardhat.

Forty Years On

For our 40th, we certainly pulled the stops out. A guided tour along the River Thames tracking Brunel's achievements started the day. We then descended into the depths of the construction shaft and Grand Entrance Hall of the Thames Tunnel – the world's first underwater tunnel. With the great assistance of Robert Hulse and the Brunel Museum we had agreement to set up the shaft with tables for eighty members and guests to eat. As those volunteer members who did the set-up and break-down will testify, getting this number of tables and chairs through a passage four feet high and three wide is no mean feat.

The catering was supplied by Julie Friend – a previous BBC *MasterChef* winner who similarly had to get all the



Dan Cruickshank at Subterranea Britannica's 40th birthday celebrations. Photo Ed Combes

food though the small entrance and down three flights of scaffolding stairs. Dinner was washed down, of course, by beer and wine – the former the appropriate *Tunnel Vision* generously supplied at cost by the Box Steam Brewery. After a splendid meal, we had short speeches and toasts from Chairman Martin Dixon, our Founder Sylvia Beamon and our new President Dan Cruickshank. Such was the success of the evening we should perhaps look for another excuse to party before we reach our Golden Jubilee.

The Future

In some ways, the best prediction of the future is to look for 'more of the same'. Subterranea Britannica has built up a great reputation and keeping strong relationships with other bodies is paramount. This includes national players such as the National Trust and English Heritage, overseas sister societies and of course the myriad of local and special interest groups across the UK.

Continuing to promote the study and recording of sites is vital – especially



Access to our 'dining room' in the Thames Tunnel construction shaft was via a tortuous scaffolding stairway. Photo Clive Penfold



for those sites that may be threatened by redevelopment or decay. Where it is practical we should also promote the preservation and restoration of sites, giving publicity, hands-on intervention and financial aid to worthy causes. And of course the visiting of sites is always the best way to really appreciate them – resisting wherever possible the predictable excuses that owners may come up with to prevent access.

Your Society Needs You!

Whilst we are clearly, currently, a very successful group, it has to be appreciated that much of this success depends on a comparatively small group of active members. It is important that volunteers continue to populate the

committee, to provide succession and to get involved with the organisation of activities and publications. Having risen like a rocket, we could equally easily fall back to earth. Alternatively the sky is the limit and we could continue to expand, and go on to reach new heights as we explore ever greater depths.

Above all it is the Membership and our elected Committee who will shape the future of Subterranea Britannica. The social element of Sub Brit has been a key part of our last forty years so please get to know fellow members, make your views known and help ensure that we're still around in forty more years' time to explore, expose and explain our marvellous Subterranean heritage.

'Interesting Underground Sites' visited by Sub Brit over the years

Old Channel Tunnel workings, Kent
'Burlington' standby Government emergency headquarters, Corsham, Wilts
Down Street disused tube station
Chancery Lane Cold War telephone exchange
RAF Spadeadam
RAF Fylingdales
Thames Barrier
Behind the scenes at La Coupole (Wizernes, France)
Wellington quarry in Arras before public opening
Boulby Potash Mine, north Yorkshire
Several active Gypsum mines
Working Bath stone mine at Limpley Stoke
HM Prison the Verne (Portland)
Standedge Railway and Canal tunnels
Victoria Arches (former storage and later air-raid shelter), Manchester
Edge Hill cutting and Wapping tunnel, Liverpool
Kingstanding 'Aspidistra' radio station and later RSG (now Police Training Centre)
Hindhead A3 road tunnel during construction
Drift exit at Caphouse Colliery
Deep-level air-raid shelters beneath London Underground stations
Sewers in east London
Mediaeval drains at Canterbury Cathedral
Erich Honeker's Bunker 5001, east Germany
Tunnels built as part of the Germania plan beneath Berlin
Aldwych disused tube station, London
Underground oil storage tanks in Pembrokeshire, Czech Republic and Sweden
US Titan nuclear missile silos
Submarine pens in Sebastopol, Ukraine
Dumpy level at Dover Castle, Kent
Clifton Rocks Railway, Bristol
Opal mines in Coober Pedy, Australia
Cappadocia underground dwellings, Turkey

We're sure all members have their favourite sites but the above list surely shows Sub Brit offers 'something for everyone'.





In 2008 a syndicate of Sub Brit members paid £3,600 for the 'Holmpton Archive'; a vast collection of photographs and documents collected by James Fox from RAF Holmpton. One of 16 filing cabinets is being winched from the upper floor of the Holmpton bunker. The archive was later donated to Sub Brit and became the basis of the Sub Brit Collection. Photo Nick Catford



Sub Brit prides itself in being able to arrange access to underground sites that have been sealed up. In 2008 we got permission to cut our way into the WWII Area Combined Headquarters Chatham known as HMS Wildfire. This was a joint venture with the Kent Underground Research Group. Photo Nick Catford



Some key underground-related dates during Sub Brit's lifetime

- 1974** Excavation of a Channel Tunnel commenced at Folkestone (this one abandoned in 1975)
- 1975** Moorgate London Underground train crash in tunnel (44 died)
- 1976** *Protect and Survive* prepared by the Home Office (although not released until May 1980)
- 1979** Publication of *Below the City Streets* by Peter Laurie
- 1982** Publication of *War Plan UK* by Duncan Campbell
- 1984** Miners' strike 1984–85 (the longest strike in British history)
- 1984** Summit rail tunnel fire (13 petrol tankers)
- 1986–2004** English Heritage Monuments Protection Programme, which led to the designation of numerous mine sites
- 1987** Fire at King's Cross Underground Station (31 died)
- 1988** Channel Tunnel construction started
- 1989** Fall of the Berlin Wall, paving the way for the reunification of Germany in 1990
- 1993** Thames Water ring main completed (longest British tunnel)
- 1994** Channel Tunnel opened / Eurostar passenger services to Brussels and Paris commenced
- 2001** Standedge Canal tunnel (Britain's longest) reopened
- 2003** Publication of *Cold War: Building for nuclear confrontation 1946–1989* by Wayne Cocroft *et al.* (English Heritage)
- 2004** Emergency Government Headquarters at Corsham declassified
- 2010** Filling-in of Fighter Command WWII bunker at Bentley Priory
- 2010** Collapse at San Jose mine in Chile that trapped 33 men (all rescued 69 days later)
- 2010** Brunel's Thames Tunnel becomes part of London Overground network
- 2013** 150 years of London Underground celebrated



During Sub Brit's 40 years existence, some sites that were classified have become available for us to visit, such as the emergency Government HQ at Corsham. The Lamson Tube room is seen here . Other sites like the WWII / Cold War bunker at Bentley Priory (above right during demolition in 2008) have been demolished. You win some you lose some!

